

VETERANS OF HONOR, SACRIFICE AND COMMITMENT

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Our great nation is often harshly criticized by anyone with an opinion. Despite its financial and political turmoil, the U. S. remains the best country in the world. Although it sounds contradictory, a strong military provides great peace of mind. Multitudes wonder if we can afford to spend ten billion per month on a war on terrorism, but the real question is, "Can we afford not to?" We have our veterans to thank for all the great freedoms we often take for granted. The honor they exude, the sacrifices, and the commitment to excellence they've made. We recognize these veterans on this special day.

The American soldier is held to a higher standard of honor. My father served in the Air Force as a maintenance crewmember. He often conveyed pride in being an integral part of a greater force. He was trained not only to perform his maintenance duties, but also to keep meticulous repair records. In this era of high-resolution digital imagery the ravages of war are brought into the living rooms via CNN, Youtube and spycams, every act is scrutinized by video watchdogs and optical eyes. The benevolent altruistic acts of our soldiers are increasingly caught on video and televised for all to see. Even nations that hate Americans cannot deny all the honorable acts our veterans have done.

Serving in the Armed Forces is synonymous with sacrifice. You are giving up years of your life. The ultimate sacrifice is giving your life for your country and debilitating injuries are also a common occurrence. Physical injuries are only a fraction of the maladies incurred by our soldiers. What used to be called shellshock is now deemed Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and is quite mysterious in its symptoms, cause and treatment. Depression, apathy and suicidal tendencies are all indicative of PTSD, but some blame chemical warfare as its cause. Are our soldiers subjected to unknown unseen weapons so sinister their effects are felt years after exposure? I shudder to envision a maniacal chemist in some clandestine lab developing the latest bio-weapon to wreak havoc on the world. Could there be any more courageous sacrifice than putting oneself in harm's way to bring to justice anyone producing these nefarious toxins?

Enlisting in the military is all about commitment, giving years of your life to the service of your country. After my father completed his basic training, which, in itself, takes great mental and physical determination, he began learning every aspect of aircraft airframe and power plant mechanics. In his day they were somewhat crude compared to the complex and redundant systems in use today. He used these very marketable skills to gain a career in the civilian airline industry. His commitment to learning aircraft paid off after his discharge.

On Veteran's Day we honor all of our soldiers who proudly served in the military for without them we could not enjoy the freedoms we often take for granted. I haven't thought about these things in quite some time. I think I'll give Dad a call.